

Editors/Directors – a photo of the model and its builder is available upon request. You may contact Steve Fienen by e-mail at <sbf317@hotmail.com>.

Student recreates Timmons Chapel in miniature

What four years ago was just scrap plywood and popsicle sticks is today a detailed model of one of Pittsburg State University's most beloved buildings. In the hands of Steve Fienen, these scrap materials have become a miniature likeness of Timmons Chapel. A likeness so realistic that it even includes lighted windows and a glowing rose window on the south wall.

Fienen, an Independence, Kan., native who is completing work toward a degree in education, said his inspiration for building the model came from a walk that he and his wife, Theresa, took on campus when they arrived four years ago.

"When we first moved here we walked around campus," Fienen said. "We both fell in love with (Timmons Chapel) as soon as we saw it."

Fienen said he took photos of the chapel from different angles and those images became his guide as he worked on the model over the next several years. He also drew inspiration from the chapel itself.

"We fish over there in the University Lake all the time. I like to go over there and just sit. This is my patio," Fienen said, pointing to the walled patio on the east side



Steve Fienen - Photo available upon request.

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of the model.

The time invested in the project is impossible to calculate, Fienen said, but it is “a lot.”

“I don’t count the hours,” Fienen said. “I didn’t work straight through, of course. I would get busy with other things and put the model away until I could come back to it from time to time. I spent most of last summer working to get the model finished because I knew I would be student teaching this fall and I wouldn’t have time for much of anything else.”

When the project was done, Fienen was faced with the dilemma of what to do with the model. He contacted Jackie Wright, president of the Friends of Timmons Chapel, who was more than delighted to accept the model on behalf of the chapel. The model is currently in the University Archives in Axe Library because there is no appropriate space to display it in the chapel.

Fienen, who also makes furniture in his shop, said he has completed several previous models – mostly old homes and churches – over the years.

“Anytime I see something like this that I love,” Fienen said, “I want to make a model of it.”

Future models will have to wait, Fienen said. As expected, Fienen’s student teaching assignment at Pittsburg Community Middle School and work each day at Pittsburg High School leaves little time for model building. Fienen said he loves working with youngsters, especially those in special education, and he hopes eventually to have a career working with students with special needs.

And one day, Fienen said, he would like to build something that resembles Timmons Chapel, but on a grander scale.

“One of these days, I’m going to have a house that looks just like that,” Fienen said.

Timmons Chapel was a gift to the university by long-time friend and benefactor Bess Spiva Timmons. Built in 1966, the all-faiths chapel is constructed in a country English Gothic style of architecture. The Timmons family donated the chapel’s organ and bells. The chapel’s sanctuary serves as a quiet place for meditation or prayer and it has been the setting for hundreds of weddings.